

Belittlement and Self-creation as Primary Rhetoric Strategies in Demosthenes' *Περὶ τῆς παραπρεσβείας* judicial and political speech

Abstract

Delivering his speech *Περὶ τῆς παραπρεσβείας*, i.e. *On the False Embassy*, Demosthenes attempted to achieve his two important objectives. The former – to prove the treason of his political adversary, Aeschines, who, as an Athenian envoy, was to accept a bribe and contribute to the conclusion of a peace agreement with Macedonia, which was unfavourable to Athens. The latter referred to demonstrating his own concern for the endangered homeland, which was intended to contribute to the accuser's political position. Obviously, an appropriate rhetoric strategy (not necessarily a single one) was necessary to achieve each of the objectives, which consisted in methodical finding of arguments to convince the listeners to accept the speech's claims.

The author of the submitted dissertation notes that the speech *On the False Embassy* is characterised by two primary rhetoric strategies, which he refers to as 'belittlement' and 'self-creation', and he argues that these are at the same time the key for interpretation which, while giving a broad perspective on the argumentation Demosthenes applied, allows to capture his basic idea to achieve the assumed objectives.

A detailed analysis of the address shows that in terms of the belittlement strategy Demosthenes finds primarily arguments connected with Aeschines' personality as the source of his inconsistent and, eventually, treacherous actions, and the entire evidence provided with them is enforced with the anticipation of the defendant's predictable line of defence, and the demand to find him guilty. The personality-related argument is also applied in the self-creation strategy, whereby the characteristics and the resulting actions of the accuser are presented as the reverse of the ones which are emphasised in the defendant. However, the 'by nature' argument, which is crucial to the speech, is appropriately adjusted for each of the strategies, not only on the principle of contradiction. For belittlement Demosthenes resorts to more daring claims, which is primarily demonstrated by the number and bluntness of the expressions with which he characterizes his opponent, e.g. in the context of his biography. However, creating his own

image, the speaker does not refer to himself with descriptions which clearly reflect his actions, and he avoids autobiographical themes focusing on presenting his own actions, conduct and feelings, which confirm his personality features. In order to reinforce the persuasive potential of self-creation Demosthenes puts forward a series of arguments presenting the conclusions of the current and past events in Greece, and citing the figures of Solon and Creon. Thereby he presents himself as a citizen who is deeply rooted in the history of his own polis, who, thinking alike the historical and literary patriots, wants to help his homeland to regain its former glory.

As the characteristics and actions presented as part of self-creation are the exact opposite of the ones revealed by belittlement, the author of the dissertation draws a conclusion concerning the interconnection of the primary strategies. Indeed it exists and results first of all from the fact that Demosthenes condemning Aeschines' actions in the belittlement implies that he himself does not represent them (or, at least, does not want to represent), and therefore he creates his own image. Likewise, applying the anticipation and postulates, he presents himself as a prudent, intelligent and uncompromising person, which, again, contributes to the self-creation. This in turn affects the belittlement by adding the belittling person credit in the eyes of the judges. Therefore, both of the primary strategies, which appear to be appropriate for judicial and political speeches, add persuasive value to each other, which undoubtedly proves their correlation.